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U.S. Official Holds Talks In India on Aid Row

Arms Supply to Pakistan at Issue

By William Claiborne
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NEW DELHI, Oct. 22—U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard W. Murphy met with Indian officials here yesterday and today in an attempt to smooth over a series of controversies arising out of the chronically uneasy U.S.-India-Pakistan triangle.

Although Murphy's visit apparently was at least partially successful, comments by Indian officials afterward indicated that apprehensions remain strong over a perceived increase in U.S. military aid to Pakistan.

Following meetings between Murphy, assistant secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, and Indian Foreign Secretary Maharajkrishna Rasgotra, the Indian government warned tonight that U.S. supply of new types of sophisticated weapons to Pakistan will "escalate tensions and set off a fresh arms race in the Subcontinent."

The Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Salman Haidar, said Murphy's meeting with Rasgotra were conducted with "candor and friendship" and had resulted in a "better opportunity for understanding each other's viewpoint."

But, when asked if India had been assured on the arms supply issue, the spokesman replied, "There was no question of assurances in this regard . . . our concern was expressed and taken note of."

The current controversy began last month with published leaks from the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence about a CIA briefing on the possibility of an Indian preemptive air strike against Pakistan's nuclear installation at Kahuta.

According to reports from Washington, the scare within the U.S.

intelligence community stemmed from a cloud formation over a part of India that prevented a U.S. spy satellite from spotting two squadrons of Indian Air Force Jaguar fighter-bombers where they should have been.

Word of the reported redeployment of the low-level attack squadrons was coupled with reports that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi allegedly had received recommendations from senior advisers that India conduct an air raid to prevent Pakistan's development of nuclear weapons.

Despite denials by State Department spokesman John Hughes that conflict between India and Pakistan was considered to be imminent, tensions between the two countries increased.

Indian officials interpreted the timing of the intelligence leak as designed to influence the U.S. Congress to provide all the military aid promised to Pakistan under the \$3.2 billion, five-year assistance package, and even justify an increase in sales of sophisticated weapons.

On the heels of that controversy was a report by the Washington correspondent of the Pakistani Urdu-language daily, Nawai Waqt, citing sources close to the White House, that President Reagan had written to Pakistani President Mohammed Zia ul-Haq offering Pakistan a "nuclear umbrella." The U.S. Embassy here quickly denied the report, and the Indian government said it had received no information on the claim. But it fueled intense speculation in the Indian press.

The sharpest official Indian reaction, however, came over a statement made on Oct. 10 by the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan, Deane R. Hinton, assuring Pakistan that the United States would come to its aid if attacked by India.

Interpreted by Indian officials as an attempt to portray India as an aggressor and thereby justify U.S. acquiescence to a Pakistani request for E2C Hawkeye aircraft equipped with early warning radar systems, Hinton's speech prompted a particularly strong official Indian protest.

While the view in the U.S. Embassy here is that Hinton's remark was misinterpreted and taken out of context, it was linked in the official Indian government statement with a condemnation of statements made to reporters in Washington by Foreign Minister Sahabzada Yaqub Khan that Pakistan continues to regard the possibility of Indian air strikes as a serious threat.

A transcript of Hinton's speech to the Pakistan Council on Security Studies in Lahore shows that in a question-and-answer session after the speech, the ambassador was asked if he could give assurances that, if Pakistan were attacked, the United States "has the means to come immediately to its aid before it is wiped out."

According to the transcript, the ambassador replied that while there was no way he could give a categorical assurance, "I think we could be responsive very quickly, would want to be responsive very quickly to contingencies from the west," apparently referring to Soviet-occupied Afghanistan and the Soviet Union.

He added, "I think if the contingency you're talking about is from the east, then as I said earlier, we will not be neutral if there is an act, committed by anybody, of flagrant aggression. There's all kinds of things we can do and would do. Whether they would be effective, arrive in time, is a very complex equation. I am hoping and I really think, that neither of these contingencies is going to arise."

"I think precisely because everybody is so tense and that there is a sense of insecurity, that the policy of the government of Pakistan to pursue a nonprovocative policy toward India and not to retaliate to the attacks suffered on its western frontiers is a sensible policy," Hinton said.

The remarks by the outspoken envoy are known to have caused consternation in the State Department.